

The Apocalypse of Ḥasheesh



Fitz Ḥugh Ludlow

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by Fitz Hugh Ludlow

with

The Hasheesh Eater

(Anonymous)



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The Apocalypse of Hasheesh by Fitz Hugh Ludlow originally appeared in the December 1856 issue of *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*. **The Hasheesh Eater** (anonymous) first appeared in the September 1856 issue of *Putnam's*. The cover art depicts the Greek philosopher Pythagoras (569–475 BC), believed by Ludlow to be an early “hasheesh eater.”

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The Apocalypse of Hasheesh

by Fitz Hugh Ludlow, 1856



In returning from the world of hasheesh, I bring with me many and diverse memories. The echoes of a sublime rapture which thrilled and vibrated on the very edge of pain; of Promethean agonies which wrapt the soul like a mantle of fire; of voluptuous delirium which suffused the body with a blush of exquisite languor—all are mine. But in value far exceeding these, is the remembrance of my spell-bound life as an apocalyptic experience.

Not, indeed, valuable, when all things are considered. Ah no! The slave of the lamp who comes at the summons of the hasheesh Aladdin will not always cringe in the presence of his master. Presently he grows bold and for his service demands a guerdon as tremendous as the treasures he unlocked. Dismiss him, hurl your lamp into the jaws of some fathomless abyss, or take his place while he

reigns over you, a tyrant of Gehenna!

The value of this experience to me consists in its having thrown open to my gaze many of those sublime avenues in the spiritual life, at whose gates the soul in its ordinary state is forever blindly groping, mystified, perplexed, yet earnest to the last in its search for that secret spring which, being touched, shall swing back the colossal barrier. In a single instant I have seen the vexed question of a lifetime settled, the mystery of some grand recondite process of mind laid bare, the last grim doubt that hung persistently on the sky of a sublime truth blown away.

How few facts can we trace up to their original reason! In all human speculations how inevitable is the recurrence of the ultimate "Why?" Our discoveries in this latter age but surpass the old-world philosophy in fanning this impenetrable mist but a few steps further up the path of thought, and deferring the distance of a few syllogisms the unanswerable question.

How is it that all the million drops of memory preserve their insulation, and do not run together in the brain into one fluid chaos of impression? How does the great hand of central force stretch on invisibly through ether till it grasps the last sphere that rolls on the boundaries of light-quickenened space? How does spirit communicate with matter, and where is their point of tangency? Such are the mysteries which bristle like a harvest far and wide over the grand field of thought.

Problems like these, which had been the perplexity of all my previous life, have I seen unraveled by hasheesh, as in one breathless moment the rationale of inexplicable phenomena has burst upon me in a torrent of light. It may have puzzled me to account for some strange fact of mind; taking hypothesis after hypothesis, I have labored for a demonstration; at last I have given up the attempt in despair.

During the progress of the next fantasia of hasheesh, the subject has again unexpectedly presented itself, and in an instant the solution has lain before me as an intuition, compelling my assent to its truth as imperatively as a mathematical axiom. At such a time I have stood trem-

bling with awe at the sublimity of the apocalypse; for though this be not the legitimate way of reaching the explanations of riddles which, if of any true utility at all, are intended to strengthen the argumentative faculty, there is still an unutterable sense of majesty in the view one thus discovers of the unimagined scope of the intuitive, which surpasses the loftiest emotions aroused by material grandeur.

I was once walking in the broad daylight of a summer afternoon in the full possession of hasheesh delirium. For an hour the tremendous expansion of all visible things had been growing toward its height; it now reached it, and to the fullest extent I realized the infinity of space. Vistas no longer converged, sight met no barrier; the world was horizonless, for earth and sky stretched endlessly onward in parallel planes. Above me the heavens were terrible with the glory of a fathomless depth. I looked up, but my eyes, unopposed, every moment penetrated further and further into the immensity, and I turned them downward lest they should presently intrude into the fatal splendors of the Great Presence. Joy itself became terrific, for it seemed the ecstasy of a soul stretching its cords and waiting in intense silence to hear them snap and free it from the enthrallment of the body. Unable to bear visible objects, I shut my eyes. In one moment a colossal music filled the whole hemisphere above me, and I thrilled upward through its environment on visionless wings. It was not song, it was not instruments, but the inexpressible spirit of sublime sound—like nothing I had ever heard—impossible to be symbolized; intense, yet not loud; the ideal of harmony, yet distinguishable into a multiplicity of exquisite parts. I opened my eyes, yet it still continued. I sought around me to detect some natural sound which might be exaggerated into such a semblance, but no, it was of unearthly generation, and it thrilled through the universe an inexplicable, a beautiful yet an awful symphony.

Suddenly my mind grew solemn with the consciousness of a quickened perception. I looked abroad on fields, and water, and sky, and read in them all a most startling meaning. I wondered how I had ever regarded them in the

light of dead matter, at the furthest only suggesting lessons. They were now grand symbols of the sublimest spiritual truths, truths never before even feebly grasped, utterly unsuspected.

Like a map, the arcana of the universe lay bare before me. I saw how every created thing not only typifies but springs forth from some mighty spiritual law as its offspring, its necessary external development; not the mere clothing of the essence, but the essence incarnate.

Nor did the view stop here. While that music from horizon to horizon was still filling the concave above me, I became conscious of a numerical order which ran through it, and in marking this order I beheld it transferred from the music to every movement of the universe. Every sphere wheeled on in its orbit, every emotion of the soul rose and fell, every smallest moss and fungus germinated and grew, according to some peculiar property of numbers which severally governed them and which was most admirably typified by them in return. An exquisite harmony of proportion reigned through space, and I seemed to realize that the music which I heard was but this numerical harmony making itself objective through the development of a grand harmony of tones.

The vividness with which this conception revealed itself to me made it a thing terrible to bear alone. An unutterable ecstasy was carrying me away, but I dared not abandon myself to it. I was no seer who could look on the unveiling of such glories face to face.

An irrepressible yearning came over me to impart what I beheld, to share with another soul the weight of this colossal revelation. With this purpose I scrutinized the vision; I sought in it for some characteristic which might make it translatable to another mind. There was none! In absolute incommunicableness it stood apart, a thought, a system of thought which as yet had no symbol in spoken language.

For a time—how long, a hasheesh-eater alone can know—I was in an agony. I searched every pocket for my pencil and note-book, that I might at least set down some representative mark which would afterwards recall to me

the lineaments of my apocalypse. They were not with me. Jutting into the water of the brook along which I wandered lay a broad flat stone. "Glory in the Highest!" I shouted exultingly, "I will at least grave on this tablet some hieroglyph of what I feel!" Tremblingly I sought for my knife. That, too, was gone! It was then that in a frenzy I threw myself prostrate on the stone, and with my nails sought to make some memorial scratch upon it. Hard, hard as flint! In despair I stood up.

Suddenly there came a sense as of some invisible presence walking the dread paths of the vision with me, yet at a distance as if separated from my side by a long flow of time. Taking courage, I cried, "Who has ever been here before me, who in years past has shared with me this unutterable view?" In tones which linger in my soul to this day, a grand, audible voice responded, "Pythagoras!"

In an instant I was calm. I heard the footsteps of that sublime sage echoing upward through the ages, and in celestial light I read my vision unterrified, since it had burst upon his sight before me. For years previous I had been perplexed with his mysterious philosophy. I saw in him an isolation from universal contemporary mind for which I could not account. When the Ionic school was at the height of its dominance, he stood forth alone, the originator of a system as distinct from it as the antipodes of mind. The doctrine of Thales was built up by the uncertain processes of an obscure logic, that of Pythagoras seemed informed by intuition. In his assertions there had always appeared to me a grave conviction of truth, a consciousness of sincerity, which gave them a great weight with me, though seeing them through the dim refracting medium of tradition and grasping their meaning imperfectly. I now saw the truths which he set forth, in their own light. I also saw, as to this day I firmly believe, the source whence their revelation flowed. Tell me not that from Phoenicia he received the wand at whose signal the cohorts of the spheres came trooping up before him in review, unveiling the eternal law and itineracy of their evolutions, and pouring on his spiritual ear that tremendous music to which they marched through space. No! During half a lifetime spent in

Egypt and in India, both motherlands of this nepenthe, doubt not that he quaffed its apocalyptic draught, and awoke, through its terrific quickening, into the consciousness of that ever-present and all-pervading harmony “which we hear not always, because the coarseness of the daily life hath dulled our ear.” The dim penetralia of the Theban Memnonium or the silent spice groves of the upper India may have been the gymnasium of his wrestling with the mighty revealer; a priest or a gymnospohist may have been the first to anoint him with the palæstric oil, but he conquered alone. On the strange intuitive characteristics of his system, on the spherulic music, on the government of all created things and their development according to the laws of number, yes, on the very use of symbols which could alone have force to the esoteric disciple, (and a terrible significancy, indeed, has the simplest form, to a mind hasheesh-quickened to read its meaning)—on all these is the legible stamp of the hasheesh inspiration.

It would be no hard task to prove, to a strong probability, at least, that the initiation into the Pythagorean mysteries and the progressive instruction that succeeded it, to a considerable extent, consisted in the employment, judiciously, if we may use the word, of hasheesh, as giving a critical and analytic power to the mind which enabled the neophyte to roll up the murk and mist from beclouded truths, till they stood distinctly seen in the splendor of their own harmonious beauty as an intuition.

One thing related of Pythagoras and his friends has seemed very striking to me. There is a legend that, as he was passing over a river, its waters called up to him, in the presence of his followers, “Hail, Pythagoras!” Frequently, while in the power of the hasheesh delirium, have I heard inanimate things sonorous with such voices. On every side they have saluted me; from rocks, and trees, and waters, and sky; in my happiness, filling me with intense exultation, as I heard them welcoming their master; in my agony, heaping nameless curses on my head, as I went away into an eternal exile from all sympathy. Of this tradition on Iamblichus, I feel an appreciation which almost convinces me that the voice of the river was, indeed, heard, though

only in the quickened mind of some hasheesh-glorified esoteric. Again, it may be that the doctrine of the Metempsychosis was first communicated to Pythagoras by Theban priests; but the astonishing illustration which hasheesh would contribute to this tenet should not be overlooked in our attempt to assign its first suggestion and succeeding spread to their proper causes.

A modern critic, in defending the hypothesis that Pythagoras was an impostor has triumphantly asked, "Why did he assume the character of Apollo at the Olympic games? why did he boast that his soul had lived in former bodies, and that he had been first Acthalides, the son of Mercury, then Euphorbus, then Pyrrhus of Delos, and at last Pythagoras, but that he might more easily impose upon the credulity of an ignorant and superstitious people!" To us these facts seem rather an evidence of his sincerity. Had he made these assertions without proof, it is difficult to see how they would not have had a precisely contrary effect from that of paving the way to a more complete imposition upon the credulity of the people. Upon our hypothesis, it may be easily shown, not only how he could fully have believed these assertions himself, but, also, have given them a deep significance to the minds of his disciples.

Let us see. We will consider, for example, his assumption of the character of Phoebus at the Olympic games. Let us suppose that Pythagoras, animated with a desire of alluring to the study of his philosophy a choice and enthusiastic number out of that host who, along all the radii of the civilized world, had come up to the solemn festival at Elis, had, by the talisman of hasheesh, called to his aid the magic of a preternatural eloquence; that, while he addressed the throng who he had charmed into breathless attention by the weird brilliancy of his eyes, the unearthly imagery of his style, and the oracular insight of his thought, the grand impression flashed upon him from the very honor he was receiving, that he was the incarnation of some sublime deity. What wonder that he burst into the acknowledgment of his godship as a secret too majestic to be hoarded up; what wonder that this sudden revelation of

himself, darting forth in burning words and amid such colossal surroundings, wend down with the accessories of time and place along the stream of perpetual tradition?

If I may illustrate great things by small, I well remember many hallucinations of my own which would be exactly parallel to such a fancy in the mind of Pythagoras. There is no impression more deeply stamped upon my past life than one of a walk along the brook which had frequently witnessed my wrestlings with the hasheesh-afreet, and which now beheld me, the immortal Zeus, descended among men to grant them the sublime benediction of renovated life. For this cause I had abandoned the serene seats of Olympus, the convocation of the gods, and the glory of an immortal kingship, while, by my side, Hermes trod the earth with radiant feet, the companion and dispenser of the beneficence of deity. Across lakes and seas, from continent to continent, we strode; the snows of Hæimus and the Himmalehs crunched beneath our sandals; our foreheads were bathed with the upper light, our breasts glowed with the exultant inspiration of the golden ether. Now resting on Chimborazo, I poured forth a majestic blessing upon all my creatures, and in an instant, with one omniscient glance, I beheld every human dwelling-place on the whole sphere irradiated with an unspeakable joy.

I saw the king rule more wisely, the laborer return from his toil to a happier home, the park grow green with an intenser culture, the harvest-field groan under the sheaves of a more prudent and prosperous husbandry; adown blue slopes came new and more populous flocks, led by unvexed and gladsome shepherds, a thousand healthy vineyards sprang up above their new-raised sunny terraces, every smallest heart glowed with an added thrill of exaltation, and the universal rebound of joy came pouring up into my own spirit with an intensity that lit my deity with rapture.

And this was only a poor hasheesh-eater, who, with his friend, walked out into the fields to enjoy his delirium among the beauties of a clear summer afternoon! What, then, of Pythagoras?

The tendency of the hasheesh-hallucination is almost always toward the supernatural or the sublimest forms of the natural. As the millennial Christ, I have put an end to all the jars of the world; by a word I have bound all humanity in eternal ligaments of brotherhood; from the depths of the grand untrodden forest I have called the tiger, and with bloodless jaws he came mildly forth to fawn upon his king, a partaker in the universal amnesty. As Ri-enzi hurling fiery invective against the usurpations of Colonna, I have seen the broad space below the tribune grow populous with a multitude of intense faces, and within myself felt a sense of towering into sublimity, with the consciousness that it was my eloquence which swayed that great host with a storm of indignation, like the sirocco passing over reeds. Or, uplifted mightily by an irresistible impulse, I have risen through the ethereal infinitudes till I stood on the very cope of heaven, with the spheres below me.

Suddenly, by an instantaneous revealing, I became aware of a mighty harp, which lay athwart the celestial hemisphere, and filled the whole sweep of vision before me. The lambent flame of myriad stars was burning in the azure spaces between its string, and glorious suns gemmed with unimaginable luster all its colossal framework. While I stood overwhelmed by the visions, a voice spoke clearly from the depths of the surrounding ether, "Behold the harp of the universe!" Again I realized the typefaction of the same grand harmony of creation, which glorified the former vision to which I have referred; for every influence, from that which nerves the wing of Ithuriel down to the humblest force of growth, had there its beautiful and peculiar representative string. As yet the music slept, when the voice spake to me again—"Stretch forth thine hand and wake the harmonies!" Trembling yet daring, I swept the harp, and in an instant all heaven thrilled with an unutterable music. My arm strangely lengthened, I grew bolder, and my hand took a wider range. The symphony grew more intense; overpowered, I ceased, and heard tremendous echoes coming back from the infinitudes. Again I smote the chords; but, unable to endure the

sublimity of the sound, I sank into an ecstatic trance, and was thus borne off unconsciously to the portals of some new vision.

But, if I found the supernatural an element of happiness, I also found it many times an agent of most bitter pain. If I once exulted in the thought that I was the millennial Christ, so, also, through a long agony, have I felt myself the crucified. In dim horror, I perceived the nails piercing my hands and feet; but it was not that which seemed the burden of my suffering. Upon my head, in a tremendous and ever-thickening cloud, came slowly down the guilt of all the ages past, and all the world to come; by a dreadful quickening, I beheld every atrocity and nameless crime coming up from all time on lines that centered in myself. The thorns clung to my brow, and bloody drops stood like dew upon my hair, yet, these were not the instruments of my agony. I was withered like a leaf in the breath of a righteous vengeance.

The curtain of a lurid blackness hung between me and heaven, mercy was dumb forever, and I bore the anger of Omnipotence alone. Out of a fiery distance, demon chants of triumphant blasphemy came surging on my ear, and whispers of ferocious wickedness ruffled the leaden air about my cross. How long I bore this vicarious agony, I have never known; hours are no measure of time in hash-eesh. I only know that, during the whole period, I sat perfectly awake among objects which I recognized as familiar; friends were passing and re-passing before me, yet, I sat in speechless horror, convinced that to supplicate their pity, to ask their help in the tortures of my dual existence, would be a demand that men in time should reach out and grasp one in eternity, that mortality should succor immortality.

In my experience of hasheesh there has been one pervading characteristic—the conviction that, encumbered with a mortal body, I was suffering that which the untrammelled immortal soul could alone endure. The spirit seemed to be learning its franchise and, whether in joy or pain, shook the bars of flesh mightily, as if determined to escape from its cage. Many a time, in my sublimest ecsta-

sy, have I asked myself, "Is this experience happiness or torture?" for soul and body gave different verdicts. Hash-eesh is no thing to be played with as a bauble. At its revealing, too-dread paths of spiritual life are flung open, too tremendous views disclosed of what the soul is capable of doing, and being, and suffering, for that soul to contemplate, till, relieved of the body, it can behold them alone.

Up to the time that I read in the September number of this magazine the paper entitled "The Hasheesh Eater" [see p.13-ed.], I had long walked among the visions of "the weed of insanity." The recital given there seemed written out of my own soul. In outline and detail it was the counterpart of my own suffering. From that day, I shut the book of hasheesh experience, warned with a warning for which I cannot express myself sufficiently grateful. And now, as utterly escaped, I look back upon the world of visionary yet awful realities, and see the fountains of its Elysium and the flames of its Tartarus growing dimmer and still dimmer in the mists of distance, I hold the remembrance of its apocalypse as something which I shall behold again, when the spirit, looking no longer through windows of sense, shall realize its majesty unterrified, and face to face gaze on its infinite though now unseen surroundings.





Fitz Hugh Ludlow (1836–1870) was an American author, journalist, and explorer; best-known for his autobiographical book *The Hasheesh Eater* (1857). The explorations of altered states of consciousness in *The Hasheesh Eater* are at the same time eloquent descriptions of elusive subjective phenomena and surreal, bizarre, and beautiful literature. Ludlow also wrote about his travels across America on the overland stage to San Francisco, Yosemite and the forests of California and Oregon, in his second book, *The Heart of the Continent*. An appendix to that book provides his impressions of the recently-founded Mormon settlement in Utah. He was also the author of many works of short fiction, essays, science reporting and art criticism. He devoted many of the last years of his life to attempts to improve the treatment of opiate addicts.

The Hasheesh Eater

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It was at Damascus that I took my first dose of hasheesh, and laid the foundations of that habit which, through the earlier years of my manhood, imprisoned me like an enchanted palace.

It was surely a worthy spot on which to build up such an edifice of hallucinations as I did there erect and cement around my soul by the daily use of this weed of insanity. Certainly no other spot could be so worthy, unless it were Baghdad, the marvelous city of the marvelous Sultan, Haroun al Rashid. I need not tell the reasons: every one can imagine them; every

one, at least, who knows what Damascus is; much more everyone who has been there.

It was among shadowy gardens, filled with oriental loungers, and in Saracenic houses, gay as kaleidoscopes with gilding and bright tintings, that I made myself the slave of the hasheesh. It was surrounded by objects so suitable for dream-work, that, by the aid of this wizard of plants, I fabricated that palace of alternating pleasure and torture which was for years my abiding place. In this palace I sometimes reveled with a joy so immense that I may well call it multitudinous; or I ran and shrieked it through its changeful spaces with an agony which the pen of a demon could not describe suitably; surrounded, chased, overclouded by all the phantasms of mythology or the Arabian Nights; by every strange, ludicrous, or horrible shape that ever stole into my fancy, from books of romance or tales of spectredom.

It is useless to think of relating, or even mentioning, the visions which, during four or five years, passed through my drugged brain. A library would not suffice to describe them all: many, also, were indistinct in their first impressions, and others have so mingled together with time, that I cannot now trace their individual outlines. As the habit grew upon me, too, my memory gradually failed, and a stupor crept over me which dulled the edges of all events, whether dreams or realities. A dull confusion surrounded me at all times, and I dropped down its hateful current, stupid, indifferent, unobserving, and never thoroughly awake except when a fresh dose of the plant stimulated my mind into a brief consciousness of itself and its surroundings. The habit and its consequences naturally deepened my morbid unsociability of temper, and sunk me still more fixedly in the hermit-like existence which I had chosen. For some years I made no acquaintance with the many European travelers

who pass through Syria; and I even, at last, got to avoid the presence of my listless oriental companions—keeping up no intimacy except with those who, like myself, daily wandered through the saharas and eases of hasheesh dreamland. Never before did I so completely give myself up to my besetting sin; for a sin I now consider it to cast off one's moorings to humanity to fly from one's fellow-beings and despise, at once, their good will and their censure.

A terrible fever at last came to my relief and saved me by dragging me, as it were, through the waters of death. While the sickness continued, I could not take the hasheesh; and when I recovered, I had so far gained my self-control, that I resolved to fling the habit aside forever. I am ashamed to confess that it was partly the urgings of an old friend which supported me to this pitch of real heroism. He was a young physician from my own city, and we had been companions and often room-mates through school and college, although it was by the merest accident that he met me in Beirut a few days before my seizure. Two months he watched by me, and then perfected his work by getting me on board the steamer for Marseilles, and starting me well homeward. I shall have to speak of him again; but I cannot give his name, further than to call him Doctor Harry, the pet title by which he was known in his own family.

I reached Marseilles, hurried through France, without passing more than a night even at Paris, and sailed for New York in a Havre steamer. In less than a month after I stepped from the broken columns which lie about the landing place of Beirut, I was strolling under the elms of my native city in Connecticut. The spell was broken by this time, and its shackles fallen altogether both from mind and body. I felt no longing after the hasheesh; and the dreary languor which once seemed to demand its restorative energy had

disappeared: for my constitution was vigorous, and I was still several years under thirty. But such chains as I had worn could not be carried so long without leaving some scars behind them. The old despotism asserted itself yet in horrible dreams, or in painful reveries which were almost as vivid, and as difficult to break as dreams. These temporary illusions generally made use of two subjects, as the scaffolds on which to erect their troublesome cloud-castles: First, the scenery and personages of my old hasheesh visions; second, the incidents of my journey homeward. I was not at all surprised to find myself haunted by sultans, Moors, elephants, afreets, rocs, and other monstrosities of the Arabian Nights; but it did seem unreasonable that I should be plagued, in the least degree, by the reminiscences of that wholesome, and, on the whole, pleasant flight from the land of my captivity. The rapidity and picturesqueness of the transit had impressed themselves on my imagination; and I now journeyed in spirit, night after night, and sometimes day after day, without rest and without goal; hurried on by an endless succession of steamers, diligences and railroad trains, all driven at their utmost speed; beholding oceans of foam, immeasurable snow mountains, cities of many leagues in extents and population, whose multitudes obstructed my passage.

But these illusions, whether sleeping or waking, were faint and mild compared with my old hasheesh paroxysms, and they grew rapidly weaker as time passed onward. The only thing which seriously and persistently annoyed me was an idea that my mind was slightly shaken. I vexed myself with minute self-examinations on this point, and actually consulted a physician as to whether some of my mental processes did not indicate incipient insanity. He replied in the best manner possible: he laughed at me, and forbade my pursuing those speculations.

All this time I amused myself in society, and even worked pretty faithfully at my legal profession. I shall say nothing of my cases, however, for, like most young lawyers, I had very few of them; all the fewer, doubtless, because long residence abroad had put me back in my studies. But I must speak at some length of my socialities, inasmuch as they soon flung very deep roots into my heart, and mingled themselves there with the poisonous decay of my former habit.

The first family whose acquaintance I renewed on reaching home was that of my dear friend, Doctor Harry. His father, the white-headed old doctor, and his dignified, kindly mother, greeted me with a heartiness that was like enthusiasm. I had been a school-fellow of their absent son; and more than that I had very lately seen him; and more still, I spoke of him with warm praise and gratitude. They treated me with as much affection as if it were I who had saved Harry's life, and not Harry who had saved mine.

A reception equally cordial was granted me by the doctor's two daughters: Ellen and Ida. Ellen, whom I knew well, was twenty-three years old, and engaged to be married. She was the same lively, nervous, sentimental thing as of old; wore the same long black ringlets, and tossed her head in the same flighty style. Ida, four years younger than her sister, was almost a stranger to me; for she was a mere child when I first became a beau, and had been transferred from the nursery to the boarding-school without attracting my student observation. She was quite a novelty, therefore, a most attractive novelty also — the prettiest, unobtrusive style of woman that ever made an unsought conquest. I was the conquest; not the only conquest that she ever made, indeed, but the only one that she ever designed to accept. I could not resist the mild blue eyes, the sunny brown hair, the sweet blonde face, and the dear little coral mouth.

She had the dearest little expression in her mouth when she was moved; a pleading, piteous expression that seemed to beg and entreat without a spoken word; an expression that was really infantine, not in silliness, but in an unutterable pathetic innocence. Well, she quite enslaved me, so that in three months I was more her captive than I had ever been to the hasheesh, even in the time of my deepest enthrallment.

I would not, however, offer myself to her until I had written to Doctor Harry, and asked him if he could permit his little sister to become the wife of the hasheesh eater. His reply was not kinder than I expected, but it was more cordial, and fuller of confidence. He knew little, in comparison with myself, of the strength of that old habit; nothing at all of the energy with which it can return upon one of its escaped victims. He was sure that I had broken its bonds; sure that I never would be exposed to its snares again; sure that I would resist the temptation, were it to come ever so powerful. Yes, he was quite willing that I should marry Ida; he would rejoice to meet me at his home as his brother. I might, if I chose, tell my history to his father, and leave the matter to him; but that was all that honor could demand of me, and even that was not sternly necessary.

I did as Harry directed, and related to the old physician all my dealings with the demon of hasheesh. Like a true doctor, he was immensely interested in the symptoms, and plunged into speculations as to whether the diabolical plant could not be introduced with advantage into the *materia medica*. No astonishment at my rashness; no horror at my danger; no grave disapproval of my weak wickedness; no particular rejoicing at what I considered my wonderful escape. And when, a few days after, I asked him if he could surrender his child to such a man as I, he

laughed heartily, and shook both my hands with an air of the warmest encouragement. I felt guilty at that moment, as well as happy; for it seemed as if I were imposing upon an unsuspecting ignorance, which could not and would not be enlightened. Nor did Ida say no any more than the others, although she made up a piteous little face when I took her hand, and looked as if she thought I had no right to ask her for so much as her whole self. So I was engaged to Ida, and was happier than all the hasheesh eaters from Cairo to Stamboul.

It was about a month after our engagement, and two months before the time fixed for our marriage, that a box reached us from Smyrna. It contained a quantity of Turkish silks, and other presents from Harry to his sisters, besides the usual variety of nargeelehs, chibouks, tarbooshes, scimitars, and so forth, such as young travelers usually pick up in the East. The doctor and I opened the packages, while Ellen, Ida, and their mother skipped about in delight from wonder to wonder. Among the last things came a small wooden box, which Ellen eagerly seized upon, declaring that it contained attar of roses. She tore off the cover, and displayed to my eyes a mass of that well-remembered drug, the terrible hasheesh.

“What is it?” she exclaimed, “Is this attar of roses? No, it isn’t. What is it, Edward? Here, you ought to know.”

“It is hasheesh,” I said, looking at it as if I saw an afreet or a ghoul.

“Well, what is hasheesh? Is it good to eat? Why, what are you staring at it so for? Do you want some? Here, eat a piece. I will if you will.”

“Bless me!” exclaimed the doctor, dropping a Persian dagger and coming hastily forward. “Is that the real hasheesh? Bless me, so that is hasheesh, is it? Dear me, I must have a specimen. What is the ordi-

nary dose for an adult, Edward?”

I took out a bit as large as a hazelnut, and held it up before his eyes. He received it reverently from my hands, and surveyed it with a prodigious scientific interest. “Wife,” said he, “Ellen, Ida, this is hasheesh. This is an ordinary dose for an adult.”

“Well, what is hasheesh?” repeated Ellen, tossing her ringlets as a colt does his mane. “Father! what is it? Did you ever take any, Edward?”

“Yes,” mumbled the doctor, examining the lump with microscopic minuteness; “Edward is perfectly acquainted with the nature of the drug; he has made some very interesting experiments with it.”

“Oh, take some, Edward,” cried Ellen. “Come, that’s a good fellow. Here, take this other bit. Let’s take a dose all round.”

“No, no,” said Ida, catching her sister’s hand. “Why, you imprudent child! Better learn a little about it before you make its acquaintance. Tell us, Edward, what does it do to people?”

I told them in part what it had done to me; that is, I told them what mighty dreams and illusions it had wrapped around me; but I could not bring myself to narrate before Ida how shamefully I had been its slave.

When I had finished my story, Ellen broke forth again: “Oh, Edward, take a piece, I beg of you. I want to see you crazy once. Come, you are sane enough in a general way; and we should all enjoy it so to see you make a fool of yourself for an hour or two.”

She put the morsel to my lips and held it there until Ida pushed her hand away, almost indignantly. I looked at my little girl, and, although she said nothing, I saw on her mouth that piteous, pleading expression which appeared to me enough to move angels or demons. It moved me, but not sufficiently; the smell of the hasheesh seemed to sink into my brain;

the thought of the old visions came up like a wave of intoxication. Still I refused; two or three times that afternoon I refused; but in the evening, Ellen handed me the drug again. "It is the last time," I said to myself; and taking it from her hand I began to prepare it. The doctor stood by, nervous with curiosity, and urged caution; nothing more than caution; that was the whole of his warning. Ida looked at me in her imploring way, but said nothing; for she only suspected, and did not at all comprehend the danger.

I swallowed the drug while they all stood silent around me; and I laughed loudly, with a feeling of crazed triumph, as I perceived the well-remembered savor. My little girl caught my sleeve with a look of extremest terror; the doctor quite as eagerly seized my pulse and drew out his repeater. "Oh, what fun!" said Ellen. "Do you see anything now, Edward?"

Of course I saw nothing as yet; for, be it known, that the effect of the hasheesh is not immediate; half an hour or even an hour must elapse before the mind can fully feel its influence. I told them so, and I went on talking in my ordinary style until they thought that I had been jesting with them, and had taken nothing. But forty minutes had not passed before I began to feel the usual symptoms, the sudden nervous thrill, followed by the whirl and prodigious apparent enlargement of the brain. My head expanded wider and wider, revolving with inconceivable rapidity, and enlarging in space with every revolution. It filled the room — the house — the city; it became a world, peopled with the shapes of men and monsters. I spun away into its great vortex, and wandered about its expanses as about a universe. I lost all perception of time and space, and knew no distinction between the realities around me, and the phantasmata which sprung in endless succession from my brain. Ida and the others occasionally spoke to me; and once I

thought that they kneeled around and worshipped me, while I, from behind a marble altar, responded like a Jupiter. Then night descended, and I heard a voice saying: "Christ is come, and thou art no more a divinity."

The altar disappeared at that instant, and I came back to this present century, and to my proper human form. I was in the doctor's house, standing by a window, and gazing out upon a moonlit street filled with promenading citizens. Beside me was a sofa upon which Ida lay and slept, with her head thrown back, and her throat bared to the faint silvery brilliance which stole through the gauze curtains. I stooped and kissed it passionately; for I had never before seen her asleep, nor so beautiful; and I loved her as dearly in that moment as I had ever done when in full possession of my sanity. As I raised my head, her father opened a door and looked into the room. He started forward when he saw me; then he drew back, and I heard him whisper to himself: "She is safe enough, he will not hurt her."

The moment he closed the door a window opened, and a voice muttered: "Kill her, kill her, and the altar and the adoration shall be yours again," to which innumerable voices from the floor and the ceiling and the four walls responded: "Glory, glory in the highest to him who can put himself above man, and to him who fears not the censure of man!"

I drew a knife from my pocket, and opened it instantly; for a mighty persuasion was wrought in me by those promises. "I will kill her," I said to myself, "dearly as I love her; for the gift of Divinity outweighs the love of woman or the wrath of man."

I bent over her and placed the knife to her throat without the least pity or hesitation, so completely had all love, all nobleness, all humanity, been extinguished in me by the abominable demon of hasheesh.

But suddenly she awoke, and fixed on me that sweet, piteous, startled look which was so characteristic of her. It made me forget my purpose for one moment, so that, with a lunatic inconsistency, I bent my head and kissed her hand as gently as I had ever done. Then the demoniac whisper, as if to recall my wandering resolution, swept again through the eglantines of the window: "Kill her, kill her, and the altar and the adoration shall be yours again."

She did not seem to hear it; for she stretched out her hands to give me a playful push backwards, while, closing her eyes again, she sank back to renewed slumber. Then, in the height of my drugged insanity, in the cold fury of my possession, I struck the sharp slender blade into her white throat once, and once more, with quick repetition, into her heart. "Oh, Edward, you have killed me!" she said, and seemed to die with a low moan, not once stirring from her position on the sofa.

I took no further notice of her; I did not see her in fact after the blow; for the smoke of sacrifices rose around me, obscuring the room; and once more I stood in divine elevation above a marble altar. There were giant colonnades on either side, sweeping forward to a monstrous portal, through which I beheld countless sphinxes facing each other adown an interminable avenue of granite. Before me, in the mighty space between the columns, was a multitude of men, all bowing with their faces to the earth, while priests chanted anthems to my praise as the great Osiris. But suddenly, before I could shake the temple with my nod, I saw one in the image of Christ enter the portal and advance through the crowd to the foot of my altar. It was not Christ the risen and glorified; but the human and crucified Jesus of Nazareth. I knew him by his grave sweetness of countenance; I knew him still better by his wounded hands and bloody

vestments. He beckoned me to descend and kneel before him; and when I would have called on my worshipers for aid, I found that they had all vanished; so that I was forced to come down and fall at his pierced feet in helpless condemnation. Then he passed judgment upon me, saying: "Forasmuch as thou hast sought to put thyself above man, all men shall abhor and shun thee."

He disappeared, and when I rose the temple had disappeared also, with every trace of that mighty worship by which I had been for a moment surrounded. Then did my punishment commence; nor did it cease throughout a seeming eternity; for, in order to complete it, time was reversed, and I could live in bygone ages; so that I ran through the whole history of the world, and was avoided with loathing by every generation. First I stood near the garden of Eden, and saw a hideous man hurrying by it, alone, with a bloody mark on his forehead. "This is Cain," I said to myself; "this is a wicked murderer, also, and he will be my comrade."

I ran toward him confidently, eagerly, and with an intense longing for companionship; but when he saw me he covered his face and fled away from me, with incomparable swiftness, shrieking: "Save me, O God, from this abominable wretch!"

After that, I hastened wildly over earth, across many countries, and through many successive ages, alone always, avoided always, an object of fear, of horror, of incredible detestation. Every one that saw me, knew me, and fled from my presence, even to certain death, if that were necessary, to evade my contact. I saw men of Gomorrah rush back into the flames of their perishing city, when they beheld me coming humbly to meet them. Egyptians, who had barely escaped from the Red Sea, leaped again into the foaming waters as I ran toward them along the

shore. Everywhere that I went, populations, even of mighty cities, scattered from my track, like locusts rising in hurried flight before the feet of a camel. The loneliest shipwrecked sailor, on the most savage island of the sea, fled from his hut of reeds, and plunged into untracked and serpent-haunted marshes at the sight of my supplicating visage. Unable to obtain the companionship of men, I at last sought that of wild beasts and reptiles — of the gods of ancient mythology, and the monsters of fairydom; but, all to no purpose. The crocodiles buried themselves in the mid-current of the Nile, as I stealthily approached its banks. I unavailingly chased the terrified speed of tigers and anacondas through the stifling heat of the jungles of Bengal. Memnon arose from his throne, and hid himself in the clouds, when he saw me kneeling at his granite feet. I followed in vain the sublime flight of Odin over the polar snows and ice-islands of both hemispheres. Satyrs hid from me; dragons and gorgons avoided me. The very ants and insects disappeared from my presence, taking refuge in dead trunks, and in the bowels of the earth. My punishment was constant and fearful — it was greater than I could bear; yet, I bore it for ages. I tried in many ways to escape from it by death; but always unsuccessfully. I sought to fling myself down precipices, but an unseen power drew me back; I endeavored to drown myself in the sea, but the billows upheld me, like a feather. It was not remorse that prompted me to these attempts at self-destruction. Remorse, penitence, and every other noble emotion had been swallowed up in mere anguish under the dreadfulness of my punishment. Sometimes I could not believe that all this was a reality, and struggled with wild, but useless ragings to break the dreadful presence of horror. At other times I felt convinced of its perfect truth; because I saw that the punishment was exactly suited to the

offense, and that it reprov'd, with astonishing directness, that unsocial and almost misanthropic spirit which I had so long encouraged by my habits of life and temper of thought. Thus, dragging about with me a ghastly immortality, I wandered through miserable year after year, through desolation after desolation, until I stood once more on the deck of the steamer to Marseilles. Now I again performed my journey homeward, passing, as before, through a succession of steamers, railroads, and diligences. But the steamers were empty; for the passengers and sailors leaped overboard at my appearance: and the vessel reeled on unguided, through wild, lonely seas that I knew not. Just in the same manner, every one fled before me from the rail-cars; and, through deserted plains and valleys, I arrived, at headlong speed, in great cities, as the only passenger. My diligence journeys were performed without companion, or conductor, or postilion, in shattering vehicles, drawn by horses which flew in the very lunacy of fright. Paris was a solitude. When I entered it — without man, and without inhabitant, and without beast — silence in its streets, in its galleries, and in its palaces — the sentinels all fled from the gates, and the children from the gardens.

At last I arrived at the entrance of my native city; and now I hoped that in presence of this familiar spot my vision would break; but it did not, and so I paused in a most miserable stupor of despair. It was early dawn, and the sky was yet gray; nor had many people arisen from their sleep. I heard dogs barking in the streets, and birds singing in the orchards; but, as always, neither the one race nor the other ventured near the spot where I stood. I sat down behind a thicket, where I could see the road, but could not be seen from it, and wept for an hour over my terrible misery. It was the first time that tears had come to soften my terrible punishment; for, hitherto my an-

guish had been desperate and sullen, or wild and blasphemous; but now I wept easily, with some feeling of tender penitence, and speechless supplication. I looked wistfully down the street, longing to enter the town, yet dreading to see the universal terror which I knew would spread through the inhabitants the moment I stepped in among them.

At last persons began to pass me; chiefly, I believe, workmen, or market people; but among them were some whose faces I had seen before. I cannot describe the thrill of tremulous, fearful, painful pleasure with which I looked from so near upon these familiar human countenances. How I longed, yet dreaded, to have one of them turn his eyes upon me. At last I said to myself: "These people know of my crime; perhaps they will not fly from me, and will only kill me."

I stepped out suddenly in front of a couple of ruddy countrymen, who were driving a market-cart from the city, and fell on my knees, with my hands uplifted toward their faces. For a moment they stared at me in ghastly horror, then, wheeling their rearing horse, they lashed him into violent flight. I rose in desperation, in fury, and, with the steps of a greyhound, leaped after them through streets now resonant with human footsteps. Oh, the wild terror! oh, the agonized shrieking! oh, the wide confusion! and oh, the swift vanishing of all life which marked my passage! I hastened on, panting, stamping, screaming, foaming in the uttermost extremity of despair and anguish, until I reached the house where my darling had once lived. As I neared the steps, I saw a person whom I knew to be Harry. He did not shriek and fly at my approach, but met me and looked me steadily in the face. His eyes, at first, were full of inquiry; but, in a moment, he seemed to gather the whole truth from my visage; and then, with a terrible tremor of abhorrence, he drew a pistol from his bosom.

“It is right, Harry,” I said; “kill me, as I killed her.”

But with a quick motion which I could not arrest, he placed the muzzle to his own temple, drew the trigger, and fell a disfigured corpse at my feet.

I howled as if I were a wild beast, and sprang over him into the doorway. I saw Ellen and her father and mother flying with uplifted hands out of the other end of the passage. I did not follow them, but turned into the parlor where I had committed my crime; and there, to my amazement, I saw Ida lying on the sofa in the same position in which I had left her; her head fallen backward, her eyes closed, her throat hidden by her long hair, and her hands clasped upon her bosom. On the floor lay my knife still open, just as it had fallen. I picked it up and passed my finger over the keen edge of the blade, muttering: “Now, I know that all this is real; now I can kill myself, for this is the time and the place to die.”

Just as I was placing the knife to my throat, I saw a sweet smile stealing over Ida’s lips. She has become a seraph, I thought, and is smiling to see the eternal glory. But, suddenly, as I looked at her for this last time, she opened her eyes on me, and over her mouth stole that sweet pleading expression which was the outward sign of her gentle spirit. “Stop, Edward!” she cried, earnestly; and springing up, she caught my hand firmly, although I could feel that her own trembled.

In that moment, my horrible dream began to fade from me, and I gazed around, no longer utterly blinded by the hazes of the hasheesh demon. She was not harmed, then! No, and I was not her murderer; no, and I had not been the loathing of mankind. Nothing of the whole scene had been real, except her slumber on the sofa, and the knife which I held in my hand. I flung it fiercely from me; for I thought of what I might have done with it had my madness been only a little

more persistent and positive. Then, struck by a sudden thought, half suspicion and half comprehension, I ran to the front doorway. Harry was not, indeed, lying there in his blood; but he was there, nevertheless, upright and in full health; and we exchanged a delighted greeting before the rest of the family could reach him.

“Why, Harry,” said the doctor, in the parlor again, “that was a most interesting substance you sent us—that hasheesh. I have made an extraordinary experiment with it upon Edward here. He muttered wonders for an hour or two in my study. He then went to sleep, and I missed him about two minutes ago. I re-ally had no idea that he had come to.”

That closing dream of crime and punishment, then, had passed through my brain in less than two minutes; and I had been standing by the sleeping form of my little girl all the time that I seemed to be wandering through that eternity of horror.

“What!” said Harry, “has Edward gone back to the hasheesh again?”

“Yes,” I replied; “but I have taken my last dose, my dear fellow. With your permission, doctor, I will pitch that infernal drug into the fire.”

“Really,” said the doctor, “I—I—don’t know. I should like to reserve a few doses for experiments.”

“Oh! don’t throw it away,” urged Ellen. “It is such fun. Edward has been saying such queer things.”

“Where is it?” asked Harry resolutely. “I will settle that question.”

“It is in the fire, brother,” replied Ida. “I threw it there half an hour ago.”

I raised the little girl’s hand to my lips and kissed it; and since then I have taken no other hasheesh than such as that. 🌸

LUMINIST PUBLICATIONS

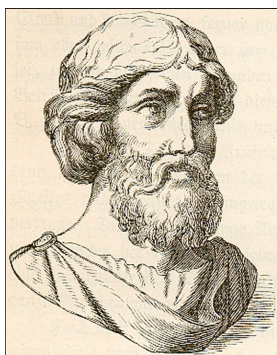
The Psychology of Hashish by *Aleister Crowley*—First published in 1909, this essay recounts the author’s search for a drug that would “loosen the girders of the soul” and quicken the attainment of results in the practice of yoga and meditation. Following his regimen of “the means of science and the aims of religion,” Crowley uses the analytical system of Buddhist psychology to describe the value of Cannabis as a “microscope of the soul”—an instrument useful to the serious student of mysticism and Magick. \$9.99

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How is it that all the million drops of memory preserve their insulation, and do not run together in the brain into one fluid chaos of impression? How does the great hand of central force stretch on invisibly through ether till it grasps the last sphere that rolls on the boundaries of light-quicken'd space? How does spirit communicate with matter, and where is their point of tangency? Such are the mysteries which bristle like a harvest far and wide over the grand field of thought. Problems like these, which had been the perplexity of all my previous life, have I seen unraveled by hasheesh, as in one breathless moment the rationale of inexplicable phenomena has burst upon me in a torrent of light.